

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4190

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4849

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FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM JULY 30

1. HAD ONE HOUR MEETING WITH KHADDAM MORNING JULY 30 IN OUR FIRST TALK SINCE BEGIN VISIT. (FONMIN HAS BEEN TRAVELLING TO INDONESIA, CAIRO AND TRIPLOI OVER PAST TEN DAYS.) HE LED WITH LEFT HOOK ASSERTING THAT, AS FAR AS HE COULD SEE, BEGIN AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY HAD SUCCEEDED IN TAKING OVER THE US ADMINISTRATION. SAID I COULD ASSURE HIM THAT THIS WAS ABSOLUTELY UNTRUE. WE DID NOT HAVE, NOR DID WE SEEK, A CONFRONTATION WITH BEGIN IN WASHINGTON BUT WE HAD MADE CRYSTAL CLEAR OUR ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLES FOR ME SETTLEMENT WHICH PREISDENT CARTER HAD DISCUSSED WITH ASSAD AND OTHER ARAB LEADERS. IT OBVIOUSLY WAS TO THE ADVANTAGE NEITHER OF THE ADMINISTRATION NOR THE PEACE PROCESS GENERALLY FOR EITHER AMERICAN OR ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION TO COALESCE IN SUPPORT OF "ISRAEL RIGHT OR WRONG." A CARTER-BEGIN CONFRONTATION COULD HAVE BROUGHT THIS ABOUT. CARTER HAD, HOWEVER, PRIVATELY EMPHASIZED HIS VIEWS ON QUESTIONS SUCH AS BORDERS AND SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. AND PRESIDENT HAD NOT HESITATED TO MAKE OUR POSITION ON LATTER ISSUE WHEN GOI LAST WEEK MOVED TO REGULARIZE THE STATUS OF QADDUM AND

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TWO OTHER SETTLEMENTS.

2. KHADDAM THEN COMPLAINED ABOUT OUR DECISION ON NEW ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL. SAID HE WONDERED WHETHER USG UNDERSTOOD WHAT A TOTALLY NEGATIVE EFFECT THAT ANNOUMENT HAD HAD ON SYRIAN AND ARAB PUBLIC OPINION GENERALLY. REPLIED WE WERE AWARE THAT IT HAD DISTURBED THE ARABS BUT AS HE KNEW OUR

ARMS RELATIONSHIP WOTH ISRAEL WAS AN ONGOING ONE. RECALLED WHEN I WAS IN WASHINGTON IN LATE JUNE I HAD HEARD COMPLAINTS FROM CERTAIN CONGRESSIONAL FIGURES THAT THE ADMINSTRATION HAD "DONE NOTHING TO MEET ISRAELI ARMS NEDS" SINCE CARTER'S INAUGURATION. THE LATEST ARGREEMENT REPRESENTED A DECISION ON ITEMS DISCUSSED OVER A LONG PERIOD IN THE PAST. FURTHERMORE, THERE HAD BEEN NOTHING DRAMATIC IN CONTENT OF THIS LATEST SALE. KHADDAM ASKED SARCASTICALLY IF HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD USE THEIR NEW HYDROFOILS AND HELICOPTERS "JUST TO GO HUNTING?" ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT IN ISRAELI HANDS, HE ASSERTED, WOULD ONLY INCREASE THE INFLUENCE OF THOSE IN THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP WHO ARGUE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD USE THEIR ARMS AGAINST THE ARABS, AND SOON. SEC. KISSINGER'S POLICY TO ENHANCE ISRAELI NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY THROUGH A GENEROUS US ARMS SUPPLY HAD BEEN PROVEN ERRONEOUS, KHADDAM ADDED. I NOTED THAT ONE DIFFICULTY SYRIA AND THE OTHER ARAB STATES HAD OVER THIS ISSUE WAS THAT OUR DISCUSSIONS OF ARMS FOR ISRAEL WERE ALWAYS HIGHLY PUBLICIZED, WHILE SOVIET SUPPLIES TO THE ARABS WERE CLOAKED IN SECRECY. HE RETORTED THAT THE USG KNEW PRECISELY WHAT SYRIA AND ALL ARAB STATES WERE RECEIVING FROM THE USSR AND YET WE PERSERVERED IN TRYING TO MAKE ISRAEL "TEN TIMES STRONGER" THAN THE ARABS.

3. KHADDAM THEN ASKED WHAT SUBSTANTIVE PROPOSALS YOU WOULD BRING NEXT WEEK. REPLIED I WAS NOT PRIVY TO THIS SINCE YOU WISHED PRESENT THESE IDEAS PERSONALLY AND DIRECTLY TO THE SECRET

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LEADERS IN EACH CAPITAL. SAID IN THIS REGARD I KNEW YOU WOULD BE PLEASED THAT YOUR VISIT COINCIDED WITH CONTINUING EFFORTS TO COORDINATE BETWEEN THE CONFRONTATION STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA. WE HOPED IN PARTICULAR THAT THE ARAB STATES HAVE BEEN GIVING FURTHER THOUGHT TO THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. HE ASKED IF I WAS HINTING THAT WE EXPECTED THE ARABS TO HAVE RETREATED FROM THEIR BASIC POSITION REGARDING THE PLO. REPLIED WE HOPED THAT THE ARAB STATES WERE TODAY BETTER AWARE THAN THEY HAD BEEN DURING YOUR ME TOUR IN FEBRUARY AND UP THROUGH PRESIDENT CARTER'S LAST MEETINGS WITH ARAB LEADERS, OF THE NEED TO HELP FIND SOME FORMULA GOVERNING PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. STRESSED THAT WE SUPPORTED INTER-RAB COORDINATION AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE BECAUSE ARAB DIVISIONS PREDICTABLY WOULD IMPEDE THE PEACE PROCESS.

4. KHADDAM NOTED THAT THE ARAB STATES WERE INDEED WORKING HARD TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A COORDINATED POSITION. PERSONALLY HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TI IF YOU HAD FOWARDED YOUR IDEAS A WEEK BEFORE YOUR TRIP SO THAT THE SAUDIS, JORDANIANS, EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS COULD HAVE HAD THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THEM BEFORE YOU ARRIVAL IN THE AREA. I SAID THAT JUST

BEFORE OUR MEETING TODAY I HAD DELIVERED TO THE PRESIDENCY A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO ASSAD. ONE OF ITS POINTS WAS THAT YOU WERE COMING TO CARRY FORWARD THE SEARCH FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE. SYRIANS SHOULD NOT EXPECT YOU TO PRESENT THEM, OR ANY OTHER PARTY, WITH AN LAREADY FORMULATED, RIGID AMERICAN PLAN. KHADDAM SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED THAT. HE ACCEPTED THAT IN THE WAKE OF YOUR VISIT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE BOTH FURTHER CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ARAB STATES CONCERNED AS WELL AS BETWEEN THEM AND THE AMERICAN SIDE. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE OBSERVED, HIS OWN PRESENCE TOGETHER WITH THOSE OF OTHER ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN SEPTEMBER WOULD PROVIDE THE CHANCE FOR FOLLOW UP CONTACTS WITH YOU.

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5. IN CONCLUSION, HE EMPHASIZED SYRIA IS LOOKING FOWARD TO YOUR VISIT AND CONTINUING OUR EXCHANGE WITH THE SAME FRANKNESS WHICH HAVE CHARACTERIZED THEM IN THE PAST.

6. COMMENT: I WAS STRUCK BY KHADDAM'S PRONOUNCED EDGINESS ABOUT BEGIN'S VISIT AND IN PARTICULAR ABOUT OUR LATEST DECISION ON ARMS FOR ISRAEL. OVERALL TONE OF OUR MEETING, NONETHLESS, WAS POSITIVE IN THAT THRUST OF HIS COMMENTS UNDERSCREOED HOW MUCH HE AND ASSAD WERE LOOKING FOR REASSURANCES ABOUT US DETERMINATION TO WORK OUT AN ACCEPTABLE ME SOLUTION. AT ONE POINT, HE EXPOSTULATED THAT "OUR COOPERATION WITH YOU IS ONLY A SMALL STREAM WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE GROW INTO A GREAT RIVER." HE TYPICALLY COUPLED THIS WITH THE COMMENT THAT THE ARABS TED MANY POTENTIAL INSTRUMENTS FOR PRESSURING THE US ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT WISH TO USE THEM.

7. SUGGEST PASS AMMAN, ALEXANDRIA, CAIRO, JIDDA, TLE AVIV.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE PLANS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, MILITARY SALES, VISITS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 30-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC04849
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840076-0260
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977072/aaaaabcw.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: c8f50d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1750531
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM
TAGS: OVIP, PDEV, PBOR, MASS, SY, US, IS, XF, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM), (VANCE, CYRUS R), (BEGIN, MENACHEM)
To: STATE AMMAN
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c8f50d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009